

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER *Full Committee Hearing on Worldwide U.S. Military Commitments*

Today, American military forces are garrisoned in Europe and Asia, largely where we left them at the end of World War II. As the Cold War evolved, we extended and even increased some of those deployments. When the superpower conflict ended, the ensuing new period of global instability led the United States to deploy some 2,000 troops to Bosnia, 3,000 troops to Kosovo, and conduct short-term operations in Somalia, Haiti, and Panama.

Most recently, the demands of the Global War on Terror have required U.S. forces to fight swift and successful wars against two states, Afghanistan and Iraq, while supporting governments are struggling in their own battles against terrorism around the world. As a result, today, roughly 19 of the Army's 33 combat brigades are deployed overseas. Similarly, 19 of 24 active duty Marine Corps infantry battalions, and four of nine reserve battalions, are not within our shores. On the Navy side, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, seven of 12 carrier battle groups were deployed simultaneously.

Approximately 180,000 troops are in Iraq and 9,000 remain in Afghanistan. While our military did remarkable work in defeating two terrorist regimes in short order, events in Afghanistan and Iraq make it clear that we have a ways to go in both countries. The terrorist elements have been defeated, but they haven't been destroyed.

Unfortunately, nobody knows for certain how many troops we need in Iraq or Afghanistan, or how long they'll be there. The Administration has stated that we will maintain troops in these two countries as long as it takes to get the job done, and not one day longer. I agree with that sentiment.

It's certainly the right mind-set to use in successfully waging the global war on terror, but it's not very useful as a planning guide.

So, because we have long-term commitments in Europe and Asia, long term requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan, and don't know how long the global war on terror will last—or for that matter whether it can ever end—we face a future security environment loaded with uncertainty.

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And uncertainty of this sort generally leads to increased risk for U.S. national security. Specifically, we face uncertain risks associated with the possibility of having to react to a future contingency while the bulk of our forces are already committed elsewhere.

The question before the Administration, Congress, and the American people is how much risk we're willing to assume. How much uncertainty must we tolerate, and what are the best ways of reducing the risks to our national security?

We can manage risk through several means. First, we can increase the size of our forces to deal with the increased demands. Second, we can accelerate transformation in our armed forces with the development of new information technologies. Third, we can develop improved defense relationships with allies and potential friends. Finally, we can adjust our global footprint by shifting some of our forces deployed overseas towards crisis areas.

We've already discussed transformation at several hearings. Today, Secretary Wolfowitz and General Pace will help us understand how the Department proposes to sustain the dramatically increased level of military operations while ensuring an acceptable level of risk across the spectrum of other possible military contingencies our nation could face in the months and years ahead.

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